

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

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CHAPTER XXVII. NEW SITUATIONS.

"HERE you are, old boy! I thought you were lost."

Lucy Thorne stood at the door and thus welcomed her brother Geoffrey coming slowly in the dusk through the garden.

"So I am!" he muttered, and was going straight into the house; but she caught him in the doorway. He looked past her into the light, which shone on his face and showed it dreamy and strange, rather like that of a man who is walking in his sleep.

The two colliers lying on the hearth looked up and pricked their ears; one gave a slight growl, the other moved his tail. Perceiving that this was no business of theirs, they lay down again in the fire-light, and sighed contentedly. Mr. Thorne was asleep in his chair; Frank was not in the room.

"What's the matter, Geoff? You have found out something!" said Lucy, and putting her two hands on his shoulders, she pushed him back on the pavement. "Tell me here. Father is asleep. You don't mean to say——"

"Don't bother! What do you mean?"

"You have found out something?" Lucy repeated. "Who told you? Mr. Cantillon? It's true, anyhow, from your face."

"No, I have found out nothing. I did not mention it to Mr. Cantillon. How can you say it is true! You are as bad as Stokes himself. Let me come in. I must speak to my father."

"Not till you have told me what is the matter," said Lucy positively.

She pushed him further from the door, and pulled it gently after her. They stood together in the garden, but it was not dark, for the large window threw a square of ruddy light upon the damp pavement and dusky rose-bushes.

"Where have you been all this time? Have you seen the Rector—or Captain Nugent? What have you done? Why do you look like that? Have you seen a ghost, or what has happened to you? What have you heard? Answer me this moment, Geoffrey."

Her brother laughed, and with a violent effort pulled himself together. In his shadowy walk through the fields and the dark plantations, all that had happened at Church Corner had begun to feel like a bad dream. Almost directly after his parting with Maggie, the whole story seemed unreal. No reason, surely, could have been strong enough to take his life from him and give it into the hands of that girl. It could not be true; the change was too sudden and too great. Now Lucy's voice, and the clutch of her hands, turned the numbness of disbelief into tolerably sharp pain. But Geoffrey knew at the same time that he must inevitably take the consequence of his own actions, and begin at once to live the life he had chosen. He must be loyal to Maggie now; and it was better to tell Lucy at once. The whole thing would seem easier, perhaps, when it was openly talked about. He did not realise, of course—men never do—what the news would be to his sister.

"I'll tell you one thing," he said, "and that will answer all your questions. You told me what to do with that rose—don't you remember? Well, I've done it."

"You have done it? What in the world do you mean?"

Lucy trembled. She looked at his coat, and saw even in that dimness that the rose was not there.

"You mean, Geoff——" she said, her voice failing oddly.

"Well, I know you only meant it for chaff, but I thought it over, and it seemed the best thing. Don't you see, it makes all safe, and pleases everybody. There, you will keep my secret, and everybody else will think it quite natural, just as old Mr. Farrant does, and my father will, I dare say. And you'll be good to her, Lucy—she has had a worried sort of life; I said I would try to make her happy. It will be better for her than being left out in the cold. Perhaps she thought so herself."

"Oh, Geoff! Geoff!"

"Don't you see, it settles everything," he said, turning away. "All must go straight now. And look here, let us never allude to that again, even between ourselves. This will stop everything, and silence everybody. No one will quite understand, except you, and you have got to keep the secret, and be good to her. That's all."

"And enough too," said Lucy very low. "Stop everything? Then there was something to be stopped!"

"I did not say so," he replied quickly.

"No, I don't believe it. But there are plenty of reasons without that."

Lucy was silent.

"I must tell my father," said Geoffrey. "Mr. Farrant wants to see him."

"What reasons—what reasons can there be?" his sister broke out passionately. "Why, in heaven's name, should you throw yourself away on a girl utterly inferior to you, when you don't love her, and she doesn't love you, and it can do no good to anybody on earth? If you could make me understand the reasons—find me one single good one—I might be able to bear it. But that silly, foolish, conceited—— Oh, Geoff, Geoff! It is simple madness! One of these days, mark my words, you will bitterly repent it. Do you mean to say that it is settled—that you have asked her this afternoon, and she has said 'yes'?"

"Yes, it is all settled, so what is the use——"

"Oh, no use—no use at all! I know that. But you did not expect me to pretend to be pleased, did you? Give me a good reason; that is all I ask."

"My reasons are my own affair."

"Oh, of course they are. You are rather less reasonable now than when you tore off abroad after Miss Latimer's engagement, and when I thought you had taken that revolver and meant to shoot yourself. Upon my word, I could almost say you had better have done it. Better die than live like a fool. My belief is that that girl has got into some awful scrape, and just catches at you to help her out of it."

"Then your belief is wrong. You are very unfair, Lucy."

"But why have you done it? Why—why—why?"

"Answer your own question," Geoffrey said, after a minute's pause. "However, most people who know Miss Farrant won't find it so hard to understand, luckily for me."

"It depends whether they know you," said Lucy.

They had moved away from the door, and were pacing up and down the flagged path together, talking in low, cautious tones. Lucy felt strangely as if something was choking her; but to her tears were almost unknown.

"Did you think I should be pleased?" she said sharply, after another painful silence.

"I don't know. I thought you would be good to me, and understand."

The choking became worse; to Lucy's horror, two scalding tears rolled down. Luckily it was dark, and Geoffrey could not see.

"Understand!" she muttered in uncertain tones. "How can anybody understand who is not as mad and foolish as yourself? There—don't speak to me. I'm going in. Lock, father is awake; go and talk to him. Have your own way, for I've done with you. But, Geoffrey, if you have done this for Miss Latimer, she will have a weight on her conscience which I should not care to carry. This means the out-and-out ruin of your life. She began it, and she has finished it. Surely she had everything she could wish or want, without the sacrifice of you as well."

"Don't talk like that!" cried Geoffrey, as if she had hurt him.

Lucy went into the house without another word. She dashed across the room with a white face, and Mr. Thorne, who was used to her moods, scarcely noticed anything. Geoffrey followed her quietly in, and began at once in deliberate tones, standing before the fire:

"Father, I have something to tell you."

Between eleven and twelve o'clock the next day Poppy Latimer was reading a letter in her sitting-room window. She stood with her back to the door, so absorbed that Arthur opened it, walked lightly across the room, and was standing close beside her before she was aware of his presence. Even then the smile with which she looked up was not all for him.

"I am so glad," she said; but her eyes were dim, and a tear ran suddenly down and fell on the letter.

"What is there to be glad about? You don't quite look as if you were," said Arthur caressingly.

As he stood close to her shoulder, his eyes could hardly help falling on the sheet of rather childish handwriting which she held in her hand.

"My dearest Poppy," he read aloud. "What infant writes to you in that familiar style?"

At the same moment his eyes idly followed the lines a little further, and as they did so his face changed. A flush stole into it slowly, and he bit his lips under his long moustache. For an instant he looked very grave, then smiled, and regained his composure.

"You can read it, dear," said Poppy. "At least, I suppose the child only meant it for me. Do you see? It is from Maggie—the news of her engagement to Geoffrey Thorne."

"Well, and you are glad?" said Arthur.

He turned away and sat down in a corner of the large sofa close by, half shading his face with his hand as he leaned on the cushions and looked up at Poppy.

"Oh, yes, very glad. The letter does not seem—well, not quite so happy as—as I should like it to be. But she would not know exactly how to express herself, perhaps. She seems to imply that she has been rather driven into it, but that is impossible. Her grandfather wished it very much, I know, and was very anxious about her. He told me so. I don't know why she should say, 'I thought my life was in my own hands, but I find it is not.' Rather odd—rather silly, isn't it? Geoffrey Thorne is so good and large-minded; he is the last person to wish to marry her against her will. You and Aunt Fanny were right about him, you see, Arthur. He must have had this in his head for some time. Well, I am very glad.

But I wish I felt quite sure that they care enough for each other."

"He cares, you may be sure, or why should he have done it?" said Arthur quietly. "She will be all right, poor little soul. Of course she is too good for him; but things right themselves in time. He is a clever fellow, by Jove. There's the old man's money, too. You had better tell him that his luck is more than he deserves, and that he has got to make her happy if he can."

"I don't think you quite appreciate my friend Geoffrey Thorne. Mr. Cantillon likes him immensely, you know."

"Oh, yes, I quite appreciate him. I value him tremendously high. I think him much cleverer than Otto does, but I think he will bore your friend to tears."

"Girls are not so easily bored as that," said Poppy; and she could not at all understand why Arthur flung himself back on the sofa cushions and burst out laughing.

It was not to be expected, of course, that he would quite enter into all her feeling about this engagement of Maggie's. She was really glad, very glad, in a quiet, subdued way. Her trust in Geoffrey told her that she need have no more anxiety about the girl who had lately become, simply through circumstances, rather more of a burden than a happiness in her life. Yet the tone of Maggie's letter made her a little uneasy. She wondered that Maggie had chosen to write, rather than to tell her face to face. In fact, now that the lady of Bryans had her way with these two vassals, it did not give her an unmixed feeling of satisfaction. Arthur's opinion, of course, was of no real consequence. He knew both of them so slightly that he could be no judge of the future. Yet the way in which the news had struck him was a vague but real element in Poppy's hardly confessed uneasiness. She missed the sympathy which had till now been so freely given to all her plans and fancies, successes and disappointments.

After luncheon they went out for a stroll with the dogs, and Mrs. Nugent joined them, Miss Fanny Latimer having driven off alone to pay a tiresome visit in the neighbourhood. She meant to call at the Rector's door and tell him how delighted she was with the latest news, finding out at the same time whether any gratitude was due to him. This she rather suspected, and was not inclined to grudge him his reward.

As the others loitered down the avenue Arthur was a little silent and languid. He complained of the smell of the dead leaves, shivered, and said he hated November. In fact, England in autumn and winter was unbearable.

"And in spring?" said his mother.

"Impossible in spring. Out of the question."

Poppy lifted her eyes and laughed, for she thought he was in fun.

"You will like it when you are stronger," she said.

"No. Can't bear the cold," said Arthur.

"But hunting, and shooting—and skating."

"My dear Poppy, I am not a barbarian. So sorry for your sake."

Mrs. Nugent interposed with a laugh and changed the subject. Knowing that Arthur was right about himself, she did not wish him to enlarge on his humours to Poppy. She would find out enough later on. And to-day even his mother could not understand what had upset Arthur's usual serenity. He was certainly cross and discontented—more so even than he had been in London with her, though he did not show it so openly.

But Poppy appeared to notice nothing. Presently she said:

"Do you mind my leaving you for a little? May I, Mrs. Nugent, as you have Arthur? I want to go and see Maggie, instead of writing to her. It will be nicer for both of us, I think."

"Certainly, my dear," Mrs. Nugent answered quickly.

"Yes, Poppy. You are right, as usual," said the young man. "We can go with you through the wood."

"And the dead leaves, dear?" suggested his mother: a remark to which he made no reply.

They walked rather silently through the wood. When they reached the gate into the lane, Arthur stepped forward to open it, and Mrs. Nugent saw an extraordinary change come into his face. He flushed slightly, his eyes seemed to darken and flash, and the discontented look which he had worn for the last hour deepened into something very like a scowl. Mrs. Nugent glanced hastily at Poppy, and was glad to see that her eyes were not, as usual, following Arthur, but that she was looking down through branches and lingering leaves in the same direction. The next instant Mrs. Nugent saw a girl's figure coming up the green lane.

Poppy went forward at once, took both Maggie's hands, and kissed her.

"Were you coming to me, dear?" she said.

Maggie muttered something in answer, hardly looking up, and in the same down-cast way shook hands with Mrs. Nugent and Arthur.

"Come along, mother," he said, and in answer to Poppy's parting smile he lifted his hat hurriedly as he walked away.

Once he turned round and looked after the two girls as they strolled slowly down the lane, Poppy with her hand on Maggie's shoulder. Then he began to whistle gently as he followed his mother along the road. Mrs. Nugent found it amusing to prolong her walk a little; she was tired of the wood and the avenue.

"I'm afraid this place is getting rather cold for you, Arthur," she said, after a few minutes' silence.

"Yes, it's a beastly climate," he answered rather absently.

"When are Otto and Alice coming?"

"On Saturday."

"And do I understand that the others can't come—your friends, I mean?"

"They won't come. Lawson evidently thinks it will be too slow, and doesn't believe in the shooting. Scott has some stupid reason or other. But Lawson is a wise man. It would be slow, I can tell you, for anybody who wasn't going to be married to it. Nothing whatever to amuse anybody. I'm glad they won't come."

"I suppose there is as much amusement as in other country places."

"No; I don't think there is."

"My dear boy, something is a little wrong. What is it?"

"Wrong! I don't know what you mean."

"Arthur, I am sure Poppy is everything—"

"Everything—and a great deal more."

"Then you don't feel so well," said Mrs. Nugent, not quite liking the tone of his last words, though in themselves they were unexceptionable.

"I feel just the same. There is nothing to make a fuss about. Everything is just the same."

Mrs. Nugent did not think so, but she walked a little way in silence. At last she said:

"Do you dislike that girl very much, Arthur? Has dear Poppy bored you with her at all? It will be all right now that she is going to be married."

"What can have put that into your head?" growled Arthur, in a very much crosser tone than he had used yet.

"Your face, my dear, when you opened the gate and saw her coming. You frowned and looked furious."

Arthur tried to laugh at this.

"I wish you wouldn't be always studying my face," he said. "Was Poppy looking at me too?"

"No, I don't think she was."

"It doesn't matter," he said, "for Poppy is not subject to fancies."

"She is a noble creature," said Mrs. Nugent earnestly. "It was not exactly fancy on my part, however. You don't know anything against the girl?"

"I—nothing, of course. Poppy has let herself be worried, but—it will be all right now, as you say. Frown! I didn't frown. Why should I? The light or the shadows must have deceived you."

He spoke uncomfortably; he was not a very good actor, and his mother was left with a haunting sensation of discomfort, a faint, troublesome suspicion of she hardly knew what. It was not weakened by Arthur's hurrying on to say that he supposed they could go away when Otto and Alice went, even if they had to come back after Christmas for a time.

"I suppose we must do that," said Mrs. Nugent. "You must, at least. There is this idea of the ball."

"That may come to nothing," he said.

"But don't say anything against it to Poppy, because she rather likes the notion."

They had turned through the churchyard, and were walking in the beech avenue which led towards Sutton Bryans, when they suddenly met Geoffrey Thorne and his father, striding along at a great pace towards the village. Neither they nor the Nugents had any wish to stop and speak, passing with a salutation which was cold enough.

"The artist does not look particularly happy," said Mrs. Nugent.

"Didn't you think so?" Arthur answered indifferently. "Perhaps I ought to have congratulated him."

"He did not look as if he wished it."

On the west side of the Bryans Court garden there was a long gravelled terrace, with large red pots set at intervals, and a low wall half covered with ivy. It was screened from the rest of the garden by trees and box hedges, and had a long view

of its own down the slopes of the park, away to distant fields that rose against the sunset.

Poppy's tastes were so much more active than contemplative that she had never cared to spend time on this terrace, though it had many associations, from the days when she used to drive her hoop up and down it to those when her mother, in failing health, was drawn in her chair along the even gravel. Once or twice, in the early days of Arthur's visit, Poppy had walked there with him. But he seemed to agree with her in preferring more distant wanderings, explorings of the country as yet so unfamiliar. And somehow, though Poppy was not conscious of it, he rather resigned himself to long solitary talks with her than sought out opportunities for them.

But when she came back that afternoon from the visit to Maggie Farrant, she walked away to the terrace and paced up and down there in a rather troubled and bewildered state of mind.

There could not, it seemed, be a more fortunate woman, or one who had her own way more triumphantly. From this high point in her garden she could look on nothing that was not hers. Not only lands and trees, but hearts were hers too. She had the devotion of her friends, great and small; she was to marry the man she would have chosen out of the world. And yet the autumn afternoon, with its grey overshadowing canopy, and that band of gold in the west, with dark purple trees breaking it, where the sun was going down—all peaceful, all as usual, and like happy afternoons before—seemed to have brought a new sadness to Poppy as she stood alone on her terrace.

She had come back from Maggie with a conviction that troubled her, that the girl was not as happy as herself, or as she ought to be. Why, then, if she did not care for him, had she promised to marry Geoffrey Thorne?

Poppy knew, or thought she knew, that no pressure had been used on either side. No one, she felt sure, had even suggested the idea to Geoffrey; and she knew old Mr. Farrant too well to think that, with all his talk, he would tyrannise over Maggie so far. Besides, the girl had far too much spirit and character to be disposed of without her own wish and consent.

Poppy tried to persuade herself that the girl was excitable, and that she ought not to have expected her to be quite natural,

quite like her own childish, affectionate self, in the first hours of her engagement.

Another thing puzzled her, and perhaps more seriously than Maggie's own manner with its something half sad, half flighty. This was the grave stiffness with which Geoffrey Thorne had behaved when, leaving his father with Mr. Farrant, he had come down to join her and Maggie in the garden. His face had changed at sight of her; his whole bearing seemed to harden into a kind of obstinate shyness. He was very unlike the old Geoffrey of Herzheim, or the friend who had thrown himself for her among the horses' feet in Paris, or the eager though quiet artist who had worked for her at Maggie's picture. Poppy was not at all accustomed to finding herself in the way; but certainly these two, who were going to fulfil one of her greatest wishes by marrying each other, had managed that afternoon to create an atmosphere in which she could not comfortably breathe. She had left them very soon, conscious of a surprise and coldness in herself which might finally have been betrayed in her manner.

A slight flush tinted her pale cheeks as she thought of it, and the stateliest of her ancestors would not have been ashamed of Porphyria, as she stood there on the terrace and paid for her generous human nature, as such people often do, in a kind of incredulous disappointment, angry with herself the next moment for unfairness. A little sharper pain came with the thought that this was a thing she could hardly talk over with Arthur. To begin with, her impressions were too vague to be talked about at all. Then she would not complain, even to him, of those two old friends of hers. Finally, though this could hardly be confessed, she was not sure of his sympathy. He had been strange to-day. Yesterday, too, there had been something a little wrong—something that gave her a pang of fear. Would all that she could give him be always enough to make him happy? Then she smiled at her own foolishness, but the "little rift" was there.

Then came a voice out of her old life, sweet and ringing, and it called "Poppy, Poppy!" from the lawn beyond the trees.

She started with surprise, for it was Aunt Fanny's voice, and she did not expect her back till an hour later.

"Here I am," she cried, and she hurried on to meet the little lady, who came through the trees with a face all smiles, and a happy, nervous manner.

As Poppy met her she broke into a small peal of laughter.

"What is it? Has anything happened?" said the girl.

"Kiss me first. Oh, Poppy, I'm younger than you. My poor child, to have such news twice in one day! You don't want to lose me, do you?"

"Lose you!" repeated Poppy, turning pale.

It seemed to her sad mood, just then, that Aunt Fanny was all she had left; but she gave no hint of this feeling.

"I came first to you," said her aunt, holding her hand. "My dear, don't be angry with me. When you are married I shall be left alone, shan't I? And I think this time it would be lonely. And he is such a dear—and the feeling of perfect trust—of course we have always cared for each other, only so many things have come between us—beautiful, unselfish things on his part, I am sure. Say you are glad, darling!"

"Mr. Cantillon!"

"Of course, dearest. He thinks you must have seen long ago."

"I never did," sighed Poppy.

There was a catch in her breath, and, to tell the truth of this dignified woman, she would very much have liked to throw her arms round her aunt's neck and cry on her shoulder. But this was impossible, and in a moment she was herself again.

"Dear Aunt Fan, I am delighted," she said, and she kissed her again with warm but calm affection. "Yes, delighted. He is perfect, and the wisest and the luckiest man! Then you never got to the Grahams?"

"My dear, I am ashamed!"

"I am delighted."

They strolled up and down for half an hour, while the gold band deepened in colour, and the world glowed with beauty before darkness settled down. There were certainly two happy people in the world, Poppy confessed with pleasure. There was no ache in it, for the marriage would not be till after Poppy's own.

They talked till Arthur's tall, slight figure came loitering through the trees. A little tired with his walk, a little bored by his mother's remarks, he was looking lazily for Poppy.

"Don't tell him just yet," Miss Fanny Latimer whispered. "We don't want anybody to know yet."

Her niece half unwillingly said: "Very well."

CONCERNING SOME GOOD THINGS.

I THINK that the most inveterate diner-out in the days of the Regency, and of George the Fourth, was the bird-like, chirruping little Bard of Erin, Thomas Moore. Fortunately for a posterity that loves to be amused, he has left a very entertaining and yet faithful record of the dinners he attended. It extends over a wider space of years than I can hope to follow; and as our admirable little poet was always on the wing, he pecked at such a number of different dinner-tables that to enumerate even a moderate proportion of them would be impossible. But at some of the best I will glance, for the convenience of the reader who wants either the leisure or the patience, or both, to wade through the eight volumes of "Journal and Correspondence" so indifferently edited by the late Earl Russell.

Sometimes Moore himself was host. Thus he writes: "Our company to dinner: Lord Granard, Lady Adelaide, Lady Caroline, Lord John [Russell], Luttrell, Fazakerley, and Villamil. The day very agreeable. Luttrell in good spirits, and highly amusing; told of an Irishman, who, having jumped into the water to save a man from drowning, upon receiving sixpence from the person as a reward for the service, looked first at the sixpence, then at him, and at last exclaimed, 'By Jasus, I'm over-paid for the job.' Lord John told us that Bolus Smith one day, in conversation with Talleyrand, having brought in somehow the beauty of his mother, Talleyrand said, 'C'étoit donc votre père qui n'étoit pas bien' (then it was your father who was ugly)."

Dining at Bowood, he meets with Lords John Russell, Holland, Thanet, and Trimlestown; Baron de Foin, Denon, Luttrell, and Concannon. Some good stories are told. A man asked another to come and dine off boiled beef and potatoes with him. "That I will," says the other, "and it's rather odd it should be exactly the same dinner I had at home for myself—barring the beef." Denon spoke of a man who, having been asked repeatedly to dinner by a person whom he knew to be but a shabby Amphitryon, went at last, and found the dinner so meagre and bad that he did not get a bit to eat. When the dishes were removing the host said: "Well, now the ice is broken, I suppose you will ask me to dine with you some

day." "Most willingly." "Name your day, then." "Aujourd'hui, par exemple," answered the dinnerless guest.

There is a good story of Lord Justice Ellenborough which Moore hears when dining with Lord Lansdowne at Bowood. Lord — yawning during his own speech, Ellenborough exclaimed: "Come, come, the fellow does show some symptoms of taste, but this is encroaching on our province."

One envies Moore's dining-out powers, and the opportunities he enjoyed of exercising them. Let us take a single fortnight and muse over the dinners he ate, and the men and women he met, and the bon-mots he must have heard. Thursday at Lady Donegal's; Friday at Rees', the publisher's; Saturday at the Artists' Benevolent Fund along with the poet Campbell, who was also a pretty good diner-out; Sunday at Lord Listowel's; Monday at Lady Jersey's, where he meets the Duke of Wellington, Earl Grey, and the Marquis of Hertford (Thackeray's Marquis of Stayne); Tuesday Lord Auckland's; Wednesday at the Literary Fund; Thursday at Lady Donegal's; Friday at Longman's; Saturday at Baring's; Sunday at Sir Francis Chantry the sculptor's; Monday at Rogers's, where he meets the celebrated vocalist, Miss Stephens (afterwards Countess of Essex), and the art patrons, Sir George Beaumont and Sir George Warrender; Tuesday at Lansdowne House, where he meets Sydney Smith, Agar Ellis, Lord and Lady Cawdor, and hears Madame Pasta sing; and Wednesday dines alone (for the first time) at Bedford Coffee House. Was ever poet so petted and patronised before? Did ever poet (except in imagination) partake of so much good cheer?

This is one of his evenings: "Obliged to dress early for Lord Belgrave's. Lord Lansdowne sent his carriage for me at ten minutes before five; when I came to take him up found that Lady Lansdowne could not accompany us, her sister was so ill. Company at Lord B.'s, the Cawdors, Mr. Granville, and ourselves. To the play, 'Paul Pry' [by Poole]; very amusing, but had heard too much of it: many of our party had seen it before, and still laughed heartily, which was no small tribute. Came away after the play; left at home by the Cawdors and sallied out again for Mrs. Shirley's assembly; heard Isabella Houlton play her wild Spanish airs, and came away with the Wilsons, who set me down at Lady Jersey's, where I did little

more than make my bow, and then set off for Mrs. Coutts's [formerly Harriet Mellon the actress, afterwards Duchess of St. Alban's] ball, where I found quadrilles going on in one room, and Braham and Miss Stephens singing in another."

It was impossible that under such conditions Moore could do justice to his poetic gifts, and accomplish any work worthy of immortality. He frittered away his time on good company and his genius on ephemeral compositions such as "Lalla Rookh" and "The Loves of the Angels," and hence already he is nearly forgotten; the majority even of his songs, some of which are exquisite in form and expression, ceasing to retain a place in the memories of men. While he was thus fluttering to and fro in the world of fashion, like a bird in a gilded cage, his charming wife, his Bessy, whom he really loved after his manner, was left at home in dull seclusion to darn her children's socks and struggle against pecuniary difficulties.

On one occasion Moore dines at Agar Ellis's; company, Lord and Lady Harewood and the Archbishop of York (rampant Tories), Sydney Smith, Lord and Lady Clifton, etc. Sits next Sydney Smith, and opposite Lord Harewood and the Archbishop—an odd conjunction of signs. In the evening Moore sings a good deal—he had a small but sweet voice, capable of great expression, and accompanied himself with much taste—among other things, his rebel song, "Oh, where's the Slave?" which enables the incorrigible Sydney to poke fun at the Archbishop as turning, under the influence of Moore's singing, into a rebel. "But it's fast subsiding," he says; "his Grace is relapsing into loyalty; if you don't sing another song you'll lose him." As Sydney and Moore go home, the latter remarks how well and good-humouredly Ellis had mixed them all up together, and Sydney replies: "That's the great use of a good conversational cook, who says to his company, 'I'll make a good pudding of you'; it's no matter what you come into the bowl, you must come out a pudding. 'Dear me,' says one of the ingredients, 'wasn't I just now an egg?' but he feels the batter sticking to him," etc., etc. There cannot be a moment's doubt that the success of a dinner from an intellectual point of view depends on the giver's skill as a host; on the dexterity with which he assort and blends together his guests; on the tact with which he affords each an opportunity

of scintillating in his turn. A dinner of stalled herbs, with wise and witty talk, felicitously seasoned and genially mixed, is superior to the high feasts of a Carême or an Ude, when this agreeable accompaniment is wanting. But to secure such a result, not only must the host understand his duties, he must limit the number of his guests. The rule of antiquity was not fewer than the three Graces, nor more than the nine Muses; but perhaps a mean between the two is the rule of perfection. Nowadays our dinners are spoiled by being overcrowded. The guests expand into a mob—a multitude, without harmony or order—and conversation becomes impossible.

One would have liked to be a guest at the dinner at Miss White's, at which, besides Moore, Hallam was present, and Sharpe, and Hobhouse, and Luttrell, and Captains (Sir Francis) Head and Denham—the latter the African traveller. Afterwards came Sir Walter Scott, his daughter, and the Lockharts. One can fancy how brilliant must have been the play of fancy and of wit; yet Moore preserves only a couple of bons-mots, and both by Luttrell. Head was describing the use of the lasso in catching men as well as animals. Yes, said Luttrell, the first syllable had caught many a man. Reference was made to a club founded by a Mr. Ashe, and somebody remarked that a son of that Ashe was then chairman of it. "Still in its Ashes live their wonted fires," ejaculated Luttrell.

The dietetic vagaries of Lord Byron are sufficiently well known. They were prompted partly by an exaggerated dread of corpulence; partly by a capricious temper; and partly by a miserable vanity, for even in the matter of food Byron wished to show that he was not as other men. The first time he dined with Moore and Rogers, at the table of the latter, his host was mortified to find that there was nothing his noble guest could eat or drink. He asked for biscuits and soda-water, but these had not been included in the menu; and eventually he made his dinner—and a hearty one—off potatoes and vinegar. It is difficult to believe that this abstemiousness, which rivalled that of the old hermits of the "Thebaid," was not a bit of "play-acting." As much may be said of his custom at his Newstead Abbey dinners of passing round among his guests, when the cloth was removed, a human skull filled with Burgundy. Was it for the same

purpose as that of the Egyptians when they exhibited a skeleton at their feasts? Byron, when he liked, could relish a good dinner; and his fame as a poet, his rank, and the adventitious romances of his career, making him a welcome guest in London circles, he had abundant opportunities of testing the skill of the best chefs in the metropolis.

That he did not always adhere to his anchorite fare he himself admits. When at Middleton, the Earl of Jersey's seat, amongst a goodly company of lords, ladies, and wits, he records that: "Chester, the fox-hunter, and I sweated the claret, being the only two who did so. Chester, who loves his bottle, and had no notion of meeting a bon vivant in a scribbler, in making my eulogy to somebody one evening, summed it up in, 'By Heaven, he drinks like a man!' Nobody drank, however, but Chester and I. To be sure, there was little occasion, for we swept off what was on the table—a most splendid board, as may be supposed, at Jersey's—very sufficiently. However, we 'carried our liquor discreetly,' like the Baron of Bradwardine."

At Holland House Byron was a frequent visitor; at Rogers's; at Sir Humphrey Davy's; at Sir Gilbert Heathcote's. Once he dined with Leigh Hunt in Horsemonger Lane Gaol, where that accomplished man of letters was undergoing imprisonment for an alleged libel on the Prince Regent—"a fat Adonis of forty." The other guest was Mitchell, the able translator of Aristophanes. Dining with Lord Holland, in St. James's Square, he meets Sir Samuel and Lady Romilly, Lord John Russell, Granville Sharpe, and Francis Horner. "Holland's society," he writes, "is very good; you always see some one or other in it worth knowing. Stuffed myself with sturgeon, and exceeded in champagne and wine in general, but not to confusion of head. When I do dine, I gorge like an Arab or a boa snake, on fish and vegetables, but no meat." Lastly, he tells of a dinner at Rogers's, where he meets Madame de Staël, Mackintosh, Sheridan, Payne Knight, and Erskine.

Rogers, the banker-poet, to whom I have already made allusion, figured more conspicuously as an Amphitryon than as a diner-out, though in the latter capacity he was by no means undistinguished. For upwards of half a century he lived at Twenty-two, St. James's Place, where all that art and wealth could do to surround

its owner with the refinements of life had been done. "I never," says Proctor, "saw any house so tastefully fitted up and decorated. Everything was good of its kind, and in good order." "The furniture," says Macaulay, "has been selected with a delicacy of taste quite unique. The most remarkable object in the dining-room," he adds, "is a cast of Pope, taken after death by Roubilliac." Rogers's breakfasts were memorable events for those who partook of them—happy hours to be treasured up among the pleasures of memory. "His breakfast-table," says Proctor, "was perfect in all respects. There was not too much of anything; not even too much welcome, yet no lack of it." As warm an eulogy might well have been pronounced on his dinner-table, which was distinguished by a fastidious delicacy and fine taste previously almost unknown to our English cuisine. I think it may fairly be said that Rogers's example did much to purge our English dinners of their exceeding coarseness, and to popularise a more refined, a lighter, and a more wholesome method of cookery than had formerly prevailed.

As all the celebrities of the half-century met, at some time or another, round Rogers's splendid board, from Byron to Browning, from Sydney Smith to Washington Irving, from Sheridan to Lytton Bulwer, one can fancy what brilliant displays of wit and wisdom it must have witnessed! How delightful must have been the intellectual tourney, with the collision of quick imaginations, and the thrust, parry, and return of well-equipped minds! Flashes of epigram, critical judgements, close-reasoned arguments, happily told stories, the apt quotation—all these blended in the sparkling stream of conversation which flowed with such spontaneous fullness! Our modern ana and anecdote books are more than half filled with the good things gathered up at Rogers's table. As for instance: Rogers having had candles placed all round the dining-room, and high up, in order to show off the pictures, he asked Sydney Smith how he liked the plan.

"Not at all," he replied; "above there is a blaze of light, and below, nothing but darkness and gnashing of teeth."

Again: Rogers happened to ask Macaulay what he thought of Miss Harriet Martineau's wonderful cure by mesmerism.

"Oh, it's all my eye and Hetty Martin-eau!" was the smiling answer.

Sydney Smith—a frequent and always

a welcome visitor at Holland House—was an incorrigible diner-out, and his geniality, good-nature, sound sense, and ready humour, made him a delightful companion everywhere. A dinner-table was hardly complete without the author of "Peter Plymley's Letters"—the bold and amusing Edinburgh Reviewer, the practical, broad-minded clergyman, who was too rational a Christian not to enjoy in decent moderation the good things of this life, while sincerely believing in the good things of another. His accumulative humour, which, when it seized on a ludicrous subject, could not rest until it had piled upon it jest after jest, as its various aspects presented themselves, was never more fertile or spontaneous than at a friend's hospitable board. He was an enormous talker, and in this respect might fairly be pitted against Macaulay, to whom he once said:

"Now, Macaulay, when I am gone, you'll be sorry that you never heard me speak."

Bishop Blomfield—of London—had been invited to a dinner, but at the last moment sent a note of excuse, on the plea that he had been bitten by a dog, whereupon Sydney remarked—remembering, perhaps, Goldsmith's "Eegy on a Mad Dog"—after hearing the note read:

"I should very much like to hear the dog's account of the affair!"

It was at a dinner that, the conversation turning on a recent project to make bread from sawdust, he said, people would soon have sprigs coming out of them. Young ladies, in dressing for a ball, would say:

"Mamma, I'm beginning to sprout!"

It was at a dinner that, when some one mentioned the approaching marriage of a young Scotchman to an Irish widow, double his age and of formidable dimensions, he burst out:

"Going to marry her! Impossible! You mean a part of her. He could not marry her all himself. It would be a case, not of bigamy, but of trigamy. The neighbourhood or the magistrates should interfere. One man marry her! It is monstrous. They might people a colony with her; or give an assembly with her; or, perhaps, take your morning's walk round her, always provided there were frequent resting-places, and you were in rude health. I once was rash enough to try walking round her before breakfast, but only got half-way, and gave it up exhausted. Or, you might read the Riot Act and disperse her; in short, you might do anything but marry her."

"Most London dinners," he remarked, on one occasion, "evaporate in whispers to one's next-door neighbour. I make it a rule never to speak a word to mine, but fire across the table; though I broke it once when I heard a lady, who sat next me, in a sweet voice say, 'No gravy, sir.' I had never seen her before, but I turned suddenly round and said: 'Madam, I have been looking for a person who disliked gravy all my life; let us swear eternal friendship.*' She looked astonished, but took the oath, and, what is better, kept it."

We shall not do amiss, I think, in turning over the pages of the "Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabbe Robinson, Barrister-at-Law," who was as confirmed a diner-out as Tom Moore, but in a narrower and more serious circle. He will assist us, however, to look in at the dinner-tables of some notable personages, and extend our view of the hosts and guests of English society in the earlier decades of the present century. Robinson was the friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth: a man of refined tastes and many acquirements, with a sincere love of letters and a great reverence for great men.

When at Coruna, in 1808, he fell in with the noble family of Holland House, of whom the reader has already seen something.† I think his description, therefore, will not be without interest for us:

"Lady Holland, with her stately figure and grand demeanour; my lord, with his countenance of bonhomie and intelligence; a lad, said to be the second son of the Duke of Bedford, Lord [John] Russell; and a gentleman whom I have heard called, satirically, Lady Holland's atheist, a Mr. Allen, but better known as an elegant scholar and Edinburgh Reviewer."

He records a remarkable dinner at Madame de Staël's, when the company included William Godwin, Cavan, Robert Adam, the diplomatist, and Lady Mackintosh. The hostess spoke freely of Napoleon, who, we know, also spoke freely of her. She had been introduced to him during his career of Italian victory; and when he affected "princely airs," and spoke as if he conferred honour on those he addressed by merely speaking to them, she took pleasure in being rude. He said to her

* Sydney borrowed the phrase from Canning's burlesque of "The Rovers," in the "Anti-Jacobin."

† ALL THE YEAR ROUND. Third Series. Vol. vi., p. 209.

that he did not think women should write books. She suavely replied: "It is not every woman who can gain distinction by an alliance with a General Bonaparte." To Madame de Condorcet, the widow of the philosopher, who was a woman of ability, he said: "I do not like women who meddle with politics." "Ah, mon Général," she answered, "as long as you men take a fancy to cut off our heads now and then, we are interested in knowing why you did it."

On the occasion of the marriage of the Princess Charlotte to Prince Leopold, Robinson dined in the Hall with his brother barristers. Each mess of four was allowed an extra bottle of wine and a goose.

A dinner of the Poets. He dines one day at a Mr. Monkhouse's, the party consisting of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Moore, and Rogers. "Five poets," says Robinson, "of very unequal worth and most disproportionate popularity, whom the public probably would arrange in a different order. During this afternoon, Coleridge alone displayed any of his peculiar talent. I have not for years seen him in such excellent health and with so fine a flow of spirits. His discourse was addressed chiefly to Wordsworth, on points of metaphysical criticism, Rogers occasionally interposing a remark. The only one of the poets who seemed not to enjoy himself, was Moore. He was very attentive to Coleridge, but seemed to relish Lamb, next to whom he was placed. . . . Lamb was in a happy frame of mind; and I can still recall to my mind the look and tone with which he addressed Moore, when he could not articulate very distinctly: 'Mister Moore, will you drink a glass of wine with me?' suiting the action to the word, and hobnobbing. Then he went on: 'Mister Moore, till now I have always felt an antipathy for you; but now that I have seen you I shall like you ever after.' Some years after I mentioned this to Moore. He recollected the fact, but not Lamb's amusing manner. Moore's talent was of another sort. For many years he had been the most brilliant man of his company. In anecdote, small talk, and especially in singing, he was supreme; but he was no match for Coleridge in his vein. As little could he feel Lamb's humour."

It so happens that we have two other accounts of this poetic gathering, Lamb's and Moore's, and to compare them is curious enough. Moore writes:—"Dined

at Mr. Monkhouse's (a gentleman I had never seen before), on Wordsworth's invitation, who lives there whenever he comes to town. A singular party. Coleridge, Rogers, Wordsworth and his wife, Charles Lamb and his sister, the poor woman who went mad in a diligence on the way to Paris, and a Mr. Robinson, one of the *minora sidera* of this constellation of the lakes; the host himself, a *Mæneas* of the school, contributing nothing but good dinners and silence. Charles Lamb, a clever fellow certainly, but full of villainous and abortive puns, which he miscarries of every minute. Some excellent things, however, have come from him."

It is very plain that Moore was utterly incapable of appreciating Lamb's peculiar genius.

Now for Lamb's more genial and generous account in a letter to Bernard Barton:—"Saturday I dined in Parnassus with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Rogers, and Tom Moore, half the poetry of England constellated in Gloucester Place. It was a delightful evening! Coleridge was in his finest vein of talk—had all the talk; and let 'em talk as evilly as they do of the envy of poets, I am sure not one there but was content to be nothing but a listener. The Muses were dumb while Apollo lectured on his and their fine art. It is a lie that poets are envious; I have known the best of them, and can speak to it, that they give each other their merits, and are the kindest writers as well as best authors. I am scribbling a muddy epistle with an aching head, for we did not quaff Hippocrene last night, marry! It was hippocrass, rather!"

As a contrast to the good dinners of which I have written so much, let us take Crabbe Robinson's feast with the monks of La Trappe:—"I was offered dinner," he says, "which I had previously resolved to accept, thinking I might, at least for one day, eat what was the ordinary food for life of men, who at one time had probably fared more sumptuously than I had ever done; but it was a trial, I own."

"I would leave nothing on my plate, and was prudent in not overloading it. The following was my fare, and that of two other guests, meanly dressed men. A little table was covered with a filthy cloth, but I had a clean napkin. First, a *soupe maigre*, very insipid; a dish of cabbage, boiled in what I should have thought butter, but that is a prohibited luxury; a dish of boiled rice seasoned with a little

salt, but by no means savoury; and barley or oatmeal boiled, made somewhat thick with milk, not disagreeable, considered as prison allowance."

A Dinner à la Russe: "At one of the most remarkable dinners I ever partook of. It was at Prince Gargarni's, the Russian Minister. But it was the eye, not the palate, that was peculiarly gratified. The apartments were splendid, and the dining-hall was illuminated by eighty-nine wax-lights. The peculiarity of the dinner lay in this, that there was nothing on the table on which the eye of the gourmand could rest. In the centre of the long table—the guests being twenty-six in number—were a succession of magnificent plateaux, beautiful figures of nymphs in chased gold, urns, vases of flowers, decanters in rich stands, with sweetmeats in little golden plates, etc., etc. A servant between each couple. At every instant was your servant whispering in your ear the name of some unknown dish. There was no harm in taking a dish at a venture, for the moment you paused your plate was whisked away, and another instantly offered. There was great variety, and everything was of first-rate excellence."

Half a century ago, "Dinners à la Russe" were virtually unknown in England. Of late years they have become the vogue—to the great injury of the Art of Conversation. For how can one talk to one's opposite neighbour through a colossal épergne or a miniature shrubbery? One is necessarily compelled to confine one's self to the guest on either side of one, and in this way, general conversation being rendered impossible, the hours are spent in unsatisfactory duologues. Floral decorations within the limits of moderation and good taste are not only permissible, but desirable. Their colours and fragrance enhance the attractions of the feast; but to convert the table into a parterre, a flower-bed, or a posy, is an absurdity, and an offence against the fitness of things.

Robinson, on one occasion, dined at Lady Blessington's, where "the amusing man of the party" was Samuel Lover, song-maker, novelist, vocalist, and miniature-painter. He sang and accompanied himself, and told some Irish tales with admirable effect, one of King O'Toole and one of an Irish Piper, both of which have been published. Among the other guests were H. F. Chorley, for so many years the musical critic of "The Athenæum"—and of some distinction as a diner-out—and

N. P. Willis, the American poet and man of letters, who in his "Pencilings by the Way" and "People I Have Met," describes some interesting dinners. Comte d'Orsay "did the honours."

We may follow him also to chatty dinner-tables, at which he meets Talfourd, the author of "Ion," Charles Lamb, Coleridge, Rogers, Macready, and Frederick Maurice, to Dr. Arnold's at Fox How, and to Wordsworth's at Rydal Mount. Happy man, whose social circle included such "immortal lights," such bright and various spirits! The late Lord Lytton and "young Disraeli" (now best remembered as Earl of Beaconsfield) pass across his horizon. At a dinner given by Miss (now Baroness) Burdett-Coutts, he mixes with "two hundred and fifty of the 'haut ton.'" At Sir F. Goldsmid's it is his enviable fortune to foregather with Mendelssohn; at Kenyon's, with Robert Browning and his wife. And so the list runs on, while we wonder not only at the extent of his acquaintance, but at the intellectual wealth of English society.

One more Robinsonian dinner must suffice:

"I dined this day with Rogers, the Dean of the poets. We had an interesting party of eight. Nixon, the publisher, Kenny, the dramatic poet—who married Mrs. Holcroft, and became an old woman—himself decrepit without being very old; Spedding, Lushington, and Alfred Tennyson, three young men of eminent talent belonging to literary young England; the latter, Tennyson, being by far the most eminent of the young poets. His poems are full of genius; but he is fond of the enigmatical, and many of his most celebrated pieces are really poetic riddles (!) He is an admirer of Goethe, and I had a long tête-à-tête with him about the great poet. We waited for the eighth—a lady—who Rogers said was coming on purpose to see Tennyson, whose works she admired. He made a mystery of this fair devotee, and would give no name. It was not till dinner was half over that he was called out of the room, and returned with a lady under his arm. A lady neither splendidly dressed nor strikingly beautiful, as it seemed to me, was placed at the table. A whisper ran along the company, which I could not make out. She instantly joined in our conversation, with an ease and spirit that showed her quite used to society. She stepped a little too near my prejudices by a harsh sentence about Goethe, which I re-

sented. And we had exchanged a few sentences when she named herself, and I then recognised the much-eulogised and calumniated Honourable Mrs. Norton. . . When I knew who she was, I felt that I ought to have distinguished her beauty and grace by my own discernment, and not waited for a formal announcement."

OCTOBER'S END.

Oh, sweet October sunshine, soft and bright,
Coming thy month's last day to glorify;
Flooding the pale blue, cloud-flecked northern sky
With lavish wealth of thy pathetic light!
While beech and chestnut all in splendour dight,
With gold, and brown, and tender russet dye,
Are decking out his grave right royally,
As slow and calm closes his last long night;
Walking along the wood-paths, where the leaves
Make a faint rustle round the falling feet,
While drooping from the red-roofed cottage eaves,
Pale vine and lingering rose make autumn sweet;
Old hopes, old loves, old fair dead memories,
Wake smiling 'neath October's dying skies.

AT SCHOOL IN FRANCE.

WHEN I became a pensionnaire at the well-known Parisian school, which I shall call Institution Notre Dame des Victoires, it was on the understanding that one of the twenty little cell-like bedrooms, allotted to such pupils as were willing to pay for them, should become for the time being mine. However, it happened that I had to wait for a vacancy, and that I was meanwhile consigned to a small dormitory, known as the Lazaret, far removed in the great pile of school buildings from the other vast dormitories. The first thing I was told was that I must get up at six, and must make my own bed—very neatly. I was about as capable of making a bed as the flies on the whitewashed ceiling above me, and could easily get up at six—without the sonorous warning of the school-bell—inasmuch as I had been awake since four wondering what on earth I should do. If I had been in one of the big dormitories, and had had to make my bed, and dress, and present my toilet properties in faultlessly neat condition for inspection, and see to the attire of the child whose "little mother" I had been constituted—all in a limited number of minutes, and in total silence—Heaven knows to what abyss of disgrace I should have sunk. But, as it was, one of the other inmates of the Lazaret was good-natured enough to help me. These Lazaret girls, all distinguished pupils, working hard—and how hard

French girls can work!—for a public examination, regarded me after the amusedly curious fashion in which honey-bees might look upon a harmless little worm, and were very kind, though quite outspoken as to their opinion of me, and—on Sundays—of my attire. On week-days we all, of course, wore the uniform of the school. I cannot, even now, think why, but nothing excited them to greater hilarity than my stockings—which they called crows—requesting to be informed if those were the sort of stockings people wore on the mountains. Very mournfully reproachful to my absent friends was I, in the long and dismal watches of the night, that they had sent me to school with stockings so amusing. By-and-by I was allowed to share a room with another—a little French Countess, a scion of a great historical family. Alas, alas! she snored terribly! I remember I used to sit up in despair and glare over—in the moonlight—from my bed to hers; then, at the first whisper of the advancing tempest, I am ashamed to say, I would make a violent grab at her recumbent figure, and shake her into semi-wakefulness. She did not seem to mind much, but it was not an agreeable way of passing the night, I should say, for either party. In the course of time I shared a room, looking out into the lovely garden, with a tall, fair English girl, who, although a delightful companion, like everybody else had her peculiarities. One of these was an intense love of order, and sometimes I longed for the conventual strictness of the adjacent dormitories. She had such an odd craze for getting up whilst it was yet dark to tidy the cupboard where I kept my belongings by candle-light. She would begin by awakening me to give me her assurance I should certainly not be disturbed, and then proceeded to pile all the articles of my apparel over me. It generally ended in some fearful mishap. I recollect starting up one dark morning just in time to see my gold watch fly meteor-like across the dimly illumined space, whilst Lavinia, candle in hand, crashed headforemost in its wake. Poor Lavinia! I heard somehow that she had married very young. I wonder where she is, and if she is happy.

There were some two hundred of us, and we were divided into classes, each class wearing a particular belt, and constituting in itself an entirely distinct school world. A girl was expected, in all minor matters, to obey her schoolfellows two classes ahead

of her, whilst it was considered a breach of etiquette to form friendships with those very much below. No disgrace was felt so keenly as failing to pass, at the proper season, into a superior class. If a girl failed two years running it was generally expected of her that she should go. Over us there reigned a great array of remarkably clever and well-educated governesses, who had, however, methods—especially of showing their displeasure—sufficiently startling to an English pupil. They called us to order, as it were, by the roar of cannon. Yet, perhaps directly after some scene of frenzy, one would come round corners upon those ladies tripping along with enchanting playfulness, or sweeping the corridors with the dignity of queens, so far as it seemed imagining they were such. Besides all these there were numerous gentle old dames holding minor posts—such as the mistress of the infirmary, the mistress of the private rooms. These old ladies used to dine alone in the refectory, and from one or other reason I was often an interested spectator of the scene. They were very stately, talking in their quavering voices of such topics as the weather in a haughty sort of way; and were altogether very grand, smoothing their faded neck handkerchiefs as if of costly lace.

"What, number sixty-five, is it, Anita?" Half-way through the dinner one of them would make a feint of discovering me. "Doubtless the child is about to have her music-lesson."

Then all the rest would murmur "C'est ça," and gaze upon me with benevolent superciliousness, pretending they were just as good as great governesses, any day; and so did I pretend, too, that they were, and that I was quite abashed by their goodness in noticing me. Dear old ladies! They were like the quaint, grass-grown nooks one came across through ancient doorways, in quiet corners of the school buildings; they were like the sweet, soft shadows of the giant horse-chestnuts at the bottom of the garden. Of course it was not betwixt us and them as it might in an English school. Here, from four to nineteen, we were all "the children," and anything like young ladyism was much discouraged. There was one rule I remember—a sad thorn in the flesh to some of us—that we should play vigorous games of exercise for half an hour after breakfast in the garden. It was left to two most amusing Scotch girls to find a method

of evading this. They were always very high in lesson and conduct marks—patterns of propriety—but more systematic rule-breakers I never met. Of course we went to the garden, as we did everything else, in orderly ranks, and they discovered that by placing themselves just behind one governess they could manage to bolt up a lofty staircase in a corner of the quadrangle before another hove into sight. We were so numerous that once in the garden or recreation-hall the chances of detection were slight. Then, of course, an equally skilful descent had to be executed. They continued to enliven the school with this entertaining spectacle for many a day. One of them was rather an untidy girl, and once, in her bird-like flight, caught the partially loose pocket of her apron upon the handle of the staircase door, and was obliged, perforce, to leave it hanging there. The governesses laid their black heads together—like so many ravens—over this pocket, and great were the consultations and disputations thereon, but nothing could be made of the enigma.

Another rule, forbidding us to enter each other's bedrooms, these two ignored in the grandest way. They held large receptions every night, the enjoyment of which was in no way interfered with by the fact that the guests were dispersed about such coigns of vantage as behind the window curtains, or under the bed. I remember being in the cupboard one night, talking away with animation to my hostess, who was in bed, when the door abruptly opened. It was old Madame Sylvain, the mistress of the rooms, and her amazement to find Janet, as she fancied, completely alone, was extreme.

"Good heavens, dear child, are you conversing with yourself?" she said blankly, after a pause.

"Madame," replied Janet, quite equal to the occasion, in a preternaturally solemn voice, "it is a part of my religion."

But I am afraid we "room girls" all transgressed very badly. "Madame, I come from studying my piano," was an announcement made very often in class, and after the profound curtsy without which no pupil ever passed a governess's desk. It was one which never failed to raise a furtive smile amongst the rest of the pupils, and I am afraid that, whether coming from sunny-haired Austrian, or soft-eyed Roumanian, or sparkling Russian, or dreamy Pole, or, indeed, from any of us belonging to whatsoever nationality of

all the many which we included, it was an announcement which had need to be translated—very liberally. There does exist this element of deceit in French schools, so often cited against them; that is one of the disadvantages of the system. But I think the moral evil is exaggerated. The sentiment was that all was fair in love and war, and farther than that we did not trouble to think. There was no spirit of meanness abroad amongst us—no tale-bearing. And on the other hand there is much worthy of admiration.

It is impossible to speak too highly of the excellent course of education imparted at a good Parisian school, and one could not but admire, where pupils are drawn from such very varying grades of society, the way in which work and conduct alone formed the stepping-stones to esteem. The pupil is known by a number and a Christian name, probably not her own, and everything else connected with her family history is, for the time being, completely lost. Incidents were continually cropping up which illustrated this. I recollect once, in the lecture hall, being very curious as to a whispered conversation betwixt the presiding professor—the professor of modern history—and the directress of studies, which by-and-by ended with her turning to us and somewhat ungraciously calling out a couple of numbers. Thereupon two girls arose for whom I had always been particularly sorry—they had such a genius for getting into disgrace—and stood blushing and looking as though they were going to cry, whilst the professor made them a formal little speech. As I dare say they well knew, it excited us to greater merriment than awe to discover they were in their own country ladies of exalted title, the nieces of a reigning European sovereign.

I remember on another occasion the suburb in which our school was situated being thrown into wild excitement by the visit to one of our number of no less a personage than an Empress. I am afraid the little girl she came to see led a sad life of it just then, poor child, with all the unmerciful badgering she had to endure from her class-fellows. But such a state of matters—exceedingly salutary, I should fancy, for those more immediately concerned—one cannot quite conceive possible at an English school. Above all, the girls were loyal in their home affections, and to their very varying creeds. What a strange division there was every evening for

“family” prayers! The Protestants went to one room, the Roman Catholics to another, the Greek Catholics ranged themselves down a long corridor, and all the little Jewesses huddled into a study.

There was no rivalry in the school so intense as that betwixt the pupils of the two principal music professors. Ours was rather the more celebrated, a composer of world-wide celebrity; but then a sort of halo surrounded theirs. He was young, and they dared not talk to him! I think Frenchwomen have little sense of the ludicrous. Not one question could a pupil address to the poor man, but must turn and ask it of the governess seated alongside. I remember a terrific storm being raised by an independent young American remarking, as to this arrangement, that it was not “respectable.” When commanded, in full assize, to state what she meant by “respectable,” she drawled forth, “Wall—decent.” However, it was a pretty little Egyptian who in my time broke through the rule. With a stamp of her dainty foot and a furious “Hold your tongue, you bother me,” she crashed this venerable edifice of tradition to the ground. I never understood why we enjoyed such license with the dancing-master. I am sure he was as dangerous as anybody; it was such a cruel affliction to him that we were not sufficiently coquettish. It was a tradition amongst us that he had no toes; he had lost them, it was understood, through something terrible undergone by him, in his youth, at the opera-house. Perhaps he danced them off, perhaps a trap-door took them; but, certainly, his shoes were very short and square. He taught us, for the most part, the steps of ballets. “Pas assez coquette,” he would scream again and again through his fiddling, and, in despair, would turn his back on us, fiddling away the while, and dance himself—square shoes, stiff joints, shabby overcoat, grey locks and all—coquetting, as coquetting should be, with an imaginary columbine, and calling on us to imitate him. The French, entering quite into the spirit of the thing, did, and were gently imitated by the Americans; whilst the English giggled at each other over the shoulder, and the faces of the Scotch were a picture!

Of course we had many high-days and holidays, celebrated by fancy fairs, private theatricals, dances, and so forth; and no festivities throughout the entire year did we enjoy so much as those on Christmas Eve. The German governess always had a

grand Christmas-tree, with great games and snapdragon afterwards. It was customary, just this once in the year, for Protestants as well as Catholics to attend midnight mass in the chapel; and we would range ourselves in the dimly-lighted concert hall, and stand, silent and expectant, until twelve, tolling solemnly from the clock on the old tower, was the signal for irrepressible "Merry Christmas" greetings to break out amongst us English-speaking girls. Then, at the throwing open of the chapel doors, we struck up a hymn, and marched slowly forward, while Madame Crédon, the head of the school, wept surreptitiously on her velvet seat of honour, and M. l'Abbé smiled genially upon us from the altar. It was a pretty and an interesting scene, the long, long line of radiantly happy young maidens, representing nationalities so diverse—in their plain black frocks, belts of different colours, and high white caps; a sparkling silver cross pinned on the breast here and there marking a pupil of distinction. There was always a two a.m. supper in the refectory afterwards. If one can picture two hundred happy girls, all talking and laughing at once, just for this one night extravagantly obstreperous, one gets some idea of the tumult. The governesses took it all in good part, and were almost as hilarious themselves, and poor old Madame Crédon kept shouting "Bon soir—bon soir—Bon soir, mes enfants," because she wanted to be in touch with us, and could think of nothing to say. Once I remember she climbed deliberately on to a high footstool—she was very small and very stout—and there, after one gasp, wished us "A 'Appy Chreestmas." The rally was greeted with such a shout of laughter, followed by a vigorous cheer, raised by some ready-witted English girl—and caught up, in extraordinary variety, by the assembled multitude—that she fled precipitately, covering her ears; at which, so soon as we could speak, we agreed we did not wonder. Floreat Institution Notre Dame des Victoires.

THE ISLAND OF PENANCE.

PILGRIMAGES of a religious kind worked by excursion trains do not very highly commend themselves to the average intelligence of our day. There may be a measure of respectable piety in the hearts of certain of the pilgrims, if not in the

majority of them; but it is hard not to be more than a little suspicious of the master minds which institute and control the pilgrimages, especially when there is money at stake, and miracles are promised to those who attend fitly disposed to welcome and appreciate them.

The Island of Penance, in Lough Derg of County Donegal, suggests these remarks. It is the mean survival of as capital a piece of superstitious chicane as ever robbed our poor foolish ancestors of their groats and rose nobles. The old legend is familiar to many people. Yet it is worth while to recapitulate it in few words. Of course, Saint Patrick is the soul and centre of it. The good saint was, we are told, so grieved at his inability to induce the Pagans of Donegal to believe in a future state that he prayed earnestly for special enlightenment, the better to be able to convert those incredulous heathens. His prayer was answered. He was guided supernaturally to an island in Lough Derg, and there shown a "privy entrie into hell." His experiences subsequently were just what one would suppose. He saw the damned in a very miserable plight. The same "privilege" was to be accorded also to others. Thus we may presume the Donegal heathen were converted much as a man is whipped into betterness.

Once established and accepted, in those dark ages the Purgatory was likely soon to be exploited by the monks who got hold of it. It became an exceedingly popular resort. Various accounts of it were written—notably that of the "Legend of the Knight," the author of which may from internal evidence have made himself familiar with Dante's "Inferno" before relating his own experiences in Lough Derg's island. A certain monk of Rhodes also astonished the world with his romantic narrative on the same subject. He visited the island in a state of anxiety about the soul of the King of Arragon, his late master. Nor could his anxiety have been much abated by his visit, if his story of the lamentable condition in which he found the dead monarch's soul may be credited in any degree. We read further, in the writing of one Staunton, of Dereham—whose record of a journey in 1409 is preserved in the British Museum—that he had a great revelation of "dragons, todes, and other 'orrible beests" while enclosed in the cave which was the very soul and core of the island. Round this cave were the huts of the monks who had charge of

the Purgatory, and who with their Prior seem to have made as hard a bargain as possible with the pilgrims, and especially those who had journeyed into Donegal from other lands. Indeed, it was this rapacity more than anything else which brought the original Lough Derg Purgatory to destruction. Not all the visitors were privileged to see the sights in the cave. This failure was particularly vexatious to men of fair intelligence who had put themselves to great inconvenience for the purpose. To be fleeced in pocket as well as disappointed of their reasonable expectations was too much. Thus complaints were made at Rome, and in 1497 the Purgatory was suppressed by a mandate of Alexander the Sixth.

This, however, did not hinder the Irish of the district from continuing their voluntary pilgrimages. So gradually the Purgatory re-established itself, a later Pope rescinded the order of his predecessor, and for about a century more the island did well. Then came the strife between England and Tyrconnell, and as a sequel sentence was passed upon the Purgatory, which was in 1632 utterly wrecked and dismantled. The unpleasant penitential resort known as Saint Patrick's bed—an area of sharp-pointed stones designed to pique bare feet—was broken up; and, in short, nothing of the old place was left except the island. As for the Purgatorial Cave, which was the occasion of such spiritual ecstasy in some and such odd hallucinations in others, it proved upon disinterested inspection to be “a poor beggarly hole, made with stones laid together with men's hands, such as husbandmen make to keep hogs from the rain.”

Thus ended the original Purgatory. The existing island of penance is not the old Purgatory. That is now overgrown with scrub and grass like the other islets which dot the south-eastern corner of the gloomy lake. It seems to be entirely neglected even by the more pensive of the pilgrims, for whom it ought to have many charms, poetical as well as spiritual. But perhaps one has no right to expect thought of any kind in these Lough Derg sinners, bound for a spell of mortification well adapted especially to keep all pleasant reflection aloof from them.

The old island still bears the name of Saints' Island. Its successor is known as Station Island. With the destruction of the original Purgatorial Cave, the degrading

influences of the place may be supposed to have been almost done away with. Merely as a sort of retreat from the cares of the world, enabling the pilgrim in quietness and peace to brace himself for another bout with sin, Station Island might have become as respectable as Saints' Island was the contrary. But it can hardly be said to have been that even fifty or a hundred years ago. Nowadays, though there is less filth and perhaps less of the brutal extortion which may be said to have sent its pilgrims forth penniless to beg their bread, there is still superstition enough of a deadening kind, and the penance is still severe enough to kill a weakling. As one reads Carleton's account of it when he visited it as “a true believer” at the susceptible age of nineteen, one marvels at its infamy. The penitents themselves were no sooner through their terrible ordeal of barefooted perambulations round and round the island on sharp stones, heated by the midsummer sun, and their frenzied night of prayer in the chapel—packed like the Calcutta Black Hole—during which they were kept awake by whacks on the head and the grim assurance by those in authority that they would become insane and lost at the same time if they slept; they had no sooner paid the priests in charge the due demanded and received their soul's release from sin in regular form, than they began to lie and cheat and steal with the most amazing briskness. There was no attempt at discrimination between these wretched sham penitents and the conscientious ones whose tears and agitation bore witness for them. If the latter were unable to make up the sum required of them for their privilege of torment, they were rated by the priests like fishwives, and perhaps, worst of all, authoritatively informed that their sufferings were all in vain under the circumstances. It was a detestable, wretched business, and Carleton's own words afterwards, when he got home, half famished, flea-devoured, and robbed, seem not inordinately strong for a disillusioned Irishman at the most impressionable time of life: “Out of hell the place is matchless, and if there be a purgatory in the other world, it may very well be said there is a fair rehearsal of it in the county of Donegal in Ireland.”

Years back it was an imperative part of the penitent's discipline to fast for some time before making the pilgrimage, and to reach the lake-side on foot.

It was not unusual then for the little town of Pettigo, some five miles distant, to be a sort of lazaret-house for the sick and the dying. The season of the pilgrimage fortunately is a short one—from June the first to August the fifteenth. One can imagine therefore that during its final week there used to be a fearful anxiety among the more impotent of the pilgrims lest their strength should give out ere the closing day.

But this is now changed. At most of the railway stations in the north and west of Ireland special return tickets are issued to Pettigo for the pilgrimage season. The very leaflet with the ritual observances printed on it for the instruction of the pilgrims, and inscribed with the impressive words: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3, gives information about these railway tickets on the other side. Nor are the penitents required even to walk the five uphill miles—rather dreary miles—from Pettigo into the moorland among the mountains of which Lough Derg's waters, with their stud of emerald islets, reflect the infrequent blue skies of Donegal. The trains are met by carmen, and all who alight at the station are greeted with the enquiry: "Are you for the island?" It may be assumed that most of them are. You can tell them by their trivial bundles, the rather strange light of anticipation in their eyes, and the slim phrase-books from which, during their railway journey—perhaps all the way from Dublin—they have been interrogating and answering themselves about their spiritual condition.

The majority of these railway travellers are women, of course, and many are of the servant-maid class. It does not need a keen eye to discern these industrious and faithful little maids, who can have little of consequence upon their souls. They have obtained a few days' holiday. Of these, perhaps, three are devoted to their parents in the wilds of the country, whom in all probability they half support with their small earnings; and the remaining three are consecrated to Lough Derg. One may wish all such pilgrims as these the best of success in their venture, and strength to get through the ordeal of their paters, aves, and credos—said to amount in all to two thousand five hundred and seventy-four—and particularly the night upon their knees "in prison." But whatever the degree of the pilgrims, they are entitled to ride the five miles to the Lough nowadays for a mere sixpence. The

pilgrim car starts soon after the arrival of the train, and a very curious study it is.

Pettigo itself is not at all a bad little village. For Ireland it is distinctly neat, and its houses have a clean, alluring look. This last, however, may be due to an annual special whitewashing early in June, ere the "season" begins. It is situated a mile or two distant from Lough Erne—a much more pleasant sheet of water than the remote and forbidding Lough Derg. That it is not wholly peopled by Catholics you may guess by the size of its Protestant church, and the orange-coloured banner which flutters somewhat pretentiously from its turret. In the evening, too, while idling through the twilight hour at the hotel window, watching the bare-legged girls going to and fro with milk-cans, the villagers gossiping at their doors, and the stately promenade of its two or three constables, suddenly you may hear the shrill notes of a drum and fife band which soon appears in the little market-place, and rather aggressively plays several tunes which full-fledged Nationalists do not care to hear. Still, there is not much likelihood of a conflict between the people of the two denominations. They agree to disagree amicably on the whole. This you will understand if you pass a second night in the village, and on the second evening are serenaded by the Catholic drum and fife band with its own fervently patriotic music.

From Pettigo the road to the Lough climbs due north immediately. It is an ascent all the way. The thoroughfare traverses a boggy, ill-cultivated district, and skirts a stream which, after rain—and it is more likely to be raining or to have just ceased raining than to be fine—may give fair sport to the two or three rustic anglers who divide their time between the water and the cattle they are supposed to be tending. A few tenements are passed. They are exceedingly strong examples of the conventional Irish cabin; built of thatch and stones, both of which have grown black with smoke and premature age, one or two chimneyed at most; with the dung-heap at the door, and the pig alternately wallowing in it and crossing the threshold with a jaunty air; and occupied humanly by a dilapidated-looking man and his wife and, say, half-a-dozen half-clad, hearty children, all of whom seem agreeably surprised to see a pedestrian. "You niver mean to say as you've thravelled it?" the master of the house

observes as he takes his short pipe from his mouth, and begins a conversation that may last till midnight ere his tongue would tire. It is evidently not the fashion for pilgrims in Anno Domini 1892 to go to their penance afoot. An irregular line of hills on both sides and in front—boggy, heathery hills of the common intractable kind—keep you company until you reach the watershed of the latter. Then from the ridge Lough Derg comes into sight, and the pilgrim's journey is temporarily ended. The eye ranges over the broad, dark sheet of water and the barren-looking hills which girdle it. On a fine day there is, of course, some brightness in the prospect; but with low clouds or rain the place seems desolation itself. Two or three little cottages may be discerned in all the miles of country visible, and no more. In the middle of this scene is Station Island, with its coterie of white buildings completely covering it. You may in the half gloom hear the dolorous bell of the chapel tolling across the water—as a further weight upon your spirits.

It is impossible to visit such a place in a cheerful mood. Indeed, you would be thought a queer creature if you did so. Neither the Prior in charge, nor his assistant priests—hard at work confessing the penitents after their laborious penances barefooted, their trying fast, and the still more exhausting night of constant prayer and wakefulness—nor the penitents themselves would feel well disposed towards the man who came into their midst with levity and mirth on his face. This is no place for sensual indulgence. The soul may run riot here; but in depression akin to madness, not in frivolity and joy. It is enough to look at the countenances of the pilgrims as they step methodically over the stones, telling their beads and muttering their prescribed paters and aves, to realise what bonds of discomfort religious superstition can put upon a man even in Anno Domini 1892. Some are kneeling at one heap of stones or "bed"; some are dragging themselves along like worms; others are going round and round these same heaps, or others, rather briskly and with a shrewder discrimination between the good stones and the bad ones; and, if you are near enough to them, you may hear yet others, with their backs to Saint Bridget's Cross and with outstretched arms, stoutly renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil thrice in succession.

They are mostly women, of the kind,

too, who do not feel much scruple in going barefoot all the day. Some are interesting-looking; young, delicate, and evidently earnest to a painful degree. You may guess that this is their first pilgrimage to the island. They don't know their way about like certain others: large-bodied, splay-footed dames, whose eyes roam here and there while their lips do their task, and whose minds, you fancy, are thinking in two or three directions at once. It is quite likely that the penitential sojourn costs the latter about half what it costs the former. As for the physical effect it produces, to the stout penitents it is a positively profitable mortification; but it may be death to certain of the girls. Visitors are not nowadays required to transport themselves experimentally into purgatory. Doubtless, however, to those of powerful imaginations, the midnight hours of kneeling, mingled with the groans of their neighbours and their own anxiety not to be remiss in one detail of the penance, there is yet a good deal of the purgatorial in Lough Derg's island of pilgrimage.

The Protestant visitor to the island must not expect to be greeted with more than cold civility. Of late the tendency to exclude him altogether from a glimpse of the place has increased. The present Prior has a particular distaste for publicity; he welcomes fully qualified penitents, and none besides. To his credit be it said that if he were offered a large sum of money by a tourist who he believed wished to see the island and its penitents merely for diversion, he would not allow the ferryman to land him. The Prior is an autocrat in Lough Derg. His will is law. The ferryman would as soon think of landing a non-Catholic on the island without special sanction as of throwing him into the lake.

But there is nothing here to induce the unsympathetic person to wish to stay for more than an hour or two. The penitents' regimen of bread and lake water, torture and mechanical prayers, might do him good, but he will hardly be persuaded to try it. He will find himself much more at home in the hotel at Pettigo, where, as he lies awake at night—there is a clock in the house with a fearful voice—he may well wonder that some ten or fifteen thousand persons can annually be found to make this pilgrimage. It need hardly be said that both Pettigo and the Church profit by the ten or eleven weeks of Lough Derg's season.

HAROLD CAMERON'S LOVE-STORY.

A COMPLETE STORY.

WHILE looking through some old papers of mine the other evening, I came across the following note, scribbled hastily on a half-sheet of paper. It was dated nearly fifteen years back; the ink was faded and turned brown. Why I had kept the thing at all I cannot imagine.

"DEAR COURTNEY" (the note ran),—"I guess I've won, old boy. Awfully sorry for you and the others, of course; but I'm in such good spirits I can't think of that. Blanche spoke to me to-night in such a way that there can be no mistake about it. She's a thousand times too good for a poor wretch like me, but I can try and be worthy of her. I will try, by Jove! I'm going to read up and improve my mind. Couldn't help sending you a line. I am a lucky dog. Eh?—Yours,

"HAROLD CAMERON."

It is strange how an old letter, even such a scrap as the above, will revive the past. As I looked at the boyish handwriting the face of Harold Cameron rose up before my mind's eye. I fancied I could hear his laughter and fresh young voice. He was only twenty at the time that letter was written. We were all—ahem!—much younger than we are now. Ugh! Confound the letter! Why had I turned it up in this way? . . . Burn all your letters, my friends, burn all your letters. Don't run the risk of recalling memories which, ten to one, are sad ones.

All the young fellows in our particular set were more or less in love with Blanche Whitworth. Some were particularly in love. I think I may, without fear of contradiction, assert that Cameron, George Coverley, and I myself, belonged to this latter class. Which of that old circle, I wonder, would care now to dispute the point? Has not Alf Turner, that roaring young blade, sobered down and gone into the Church, kept in subjection by a wife who rules the parish? Has not Grantley emigrated and made a fortune in sheep in Australia? Carstone, poor fellow, the jovial, the kindly, lies buried on an African battlefield. The rest of them—are they not respectable married men with families—men in the City; lawyers, stockbrokers, what not?

I remember quite well the night when we first saw Blanche Whitworth. It was at a dance at the Simpsons' when that

bright luminary appeared on our horizon. At this moment, looking calmly back upon events, I cannot for the life of me say what it was in the girl that made the attraction. She was pretty, I admit, but not at all surpassingly beautiful; her conversation was far from brilliant, indeed I never heard her say anything worth remembering; and yet there was always a little court round her, and all the men were dying to dance with her—ay, ready to die for a smile.

The other girls disliked her, as was natural. "Whatever people can see in Miss Whitworth I cannot imagine," was their usual remark.

Both Coverley and I danced with Miss Blanche on that first night—Cameron had not yet appeared upon the scene; after that we followed her about sedulously. Whenever we found she was to be anywhere within a radius of some miles, we always determined to be there too, or perish in the attempt. If we did not obtain invitations in the usual way, we bothered people for them in the most shameless manner.

It was quite a friendly rivalry between us, for George and I were far too good friends to quarrel. We used to talk to one another quite openly about our chances of success, and agreed that whichever the lady should choose was to bear his triumph humbly, and his friend his own hard lot with meekness. That one of us two must eventually secure the prize we do not seem to have doubted. I think I may assert without vanity that we were preferred above the crowd.

There is nothing like telling the truth, and I had better say at once that I am afraid the girl was a flirt; that is putting the case mildly. She had a charming way of making her partner for the time being believe that he was the one selected mortal from all the world with whom she alone liked to dance. That may sound trivial, put thus boldly; but it is true.

At that time I was a briefless barrister, and occupied chambers in Blank Court along with my friend Coverley, who had the rooms adjoining. Many a pipe did we smoke together in those brave days of old on our return from some of the festivities I have alluded to, while the chimes of the church clock outside struck far on into the morning.

It was not a great while after we had first known Miss Whitworth when young Harold Cameron came up to town, like

myself, with an ultimate view to the wool-sack. Mr. Cameron was to read for the Bar; and he was committed, in a sense, to my charge as one who could give him advice upon his studies. He was often in at our chambers, and both George and I grew to like the young fellow as we got to know him. We regarded him, I know, as immeasurably our junior both in years and experience. He was nearly of age—some five years younger than the present narrator; George, in his turn, being a year or two older than I was.

Our new visitor was a light-haired, blue-eyed youth, with the most infectious laugh in the world. His good humour was always quite irresistible to me; indeed, there were few people he met with whom the young fellow did not make friends. We speedily introduced him to our circle, where he became very popular.

I have wondered since that, when Cameron one day informed us that he had, in common with George and me, received an invitation to an evening at the Whitworths', no suspicion of what must inevitably follow crossed our minds.

We went. Cameron was led captive.

Mrs. Whitworth was a very nice old lady, but dreadfully deaf. Her deafness was the one topic upon which she ever talked. To every fresh acquaintance she imparted information on this head in a series of stereotyped remarks which never varied. In the course of my experience I heard the conversation so frequently that I can distinctly remember it after all this lapse of time. To call it a conversation is, indeed, misleading. The old lady was far too deaf to hear any word that was spoken to her; the remarks were consequently all on her side, delivered with such a strident tone and distinctness of enunciation that they were always audible across a large room. The performance was known among irreverent youth as "Mrs. Whitworth's Recitation."

The reason I recall it at this moment is that it was on the first night of Cameron's introduction to Miss Blanche that I was suddenly reserved by her mother as audience. I was going up to speak to the younger lady, with whom I was now on such good terms as to feel pretty confident of my success. In passing Mrs. Whitworth I foolishly let fall some slight remark.

"I didn't hear you," said the lady, detaining me, and speaking with an aggravating slowness; "my deafness is

increasing. It is, you know, a purely nervous deafness."

I bowed assent.

"Our own doctor has told me: 'Mrs. Whitworth, yours is a purely nervous deafness.' I determined to have further advice; I went to Sir James Cope. You know Sir James Cope?"

I didn't; but I nodded in the affirmative. At this moment I saw Harold, who had been introduced earlier in the evening, leading Miss Blanche off for the waltz.

"I went to Sir James Cope; I saw all his instruments; he examined my ears; and what did he say? He said: 'Madam, never have your ears tampered with; yours is a purely nervous deafness.' When I was down in the country, Mr. Crimble, a most excellent and clever man, saw me and said: 'You must never have your ears tampered with; yours is a purely nervous deafness.' A remarkable consensus of opinion—which coincides entirely with my own views on the matter.—Oh, Mrs. Streatham! how is your poor husband? Quite worn out?"—and I was free to escape.

I mention the foregoing little conversation because, although it may appear absurdly unimportant and out of place in a narrative of this kind, it was while I was listening to Mrs. Whitworth's remarks, and seeing Harold walk by with Miss Blanche, that it suddenly flashed upon me that any reign of mine was over. When I saw the young fellow's radiant face, and the girl with her eyes looking straight into his with a peculiar thrilling air which was all her own, I seemed to have a kind of premonition of what Cameron would feel for her, and she, if she were human, for him. It was rather a tragic moment for me; I hope I listened to the mother without undue impatience.

I don't remember very much more that happened that evening.

When Cameron, George, and I were walking home together through the summer night, it was the first-named who talked all the way; the two elder men were singularly silent. And the talk was all on one subject, too; and I need not say what that was.

When we had said good-night to our young friend at the door of our chambers, and had gone up to our room and lighted the pipe of peace, George turned and said to me:

"Well, old fellow?"

"Well?" said I.

"Our ingenious youth has done it, you see. We might have known he would fall head over ears in love with the girl; but you only think of these things afterwards. The serious thing for you and me, my boy," continued George, as though we had had a joint partnership interest in the affair, "is that Miss Blanche is, if I mistake not, also '*touchée au cœur*'"—the speaker smote his waistcoat with a dramatic air—"or else she's the most consummate flirt that ever lived. The two were having a high old time down in the supper-room. Methinks that a friend of mine—one Courtney—did not enjoy with his usual zest the pleasures of the *mazy* dance."

"Oh, confound it, George!" I said; "you know how I feel. I had an idea I was getting on well with the girl; and to-night she would scarcely look at me."

"I have long since," said George solemnly, "given up any hopes in the direction we know of, and I should advise you, my friend, from this moment to do the same. Our young friend will win in the race, you will see. Is the prize worth having, do you think? I shall take up the sensible position of the fox in the fable; my taste for grapes of any kind has quite departed."

"I hope," said I, with a groan—"I hope the girl is worthy of him, and won't play with him as—as—but never mind that. Let us hope Cameron will be more successful than—than some others of our acquaintance."

And we got our candles and went to bed.

Cameron was successful—to all outward appearance. From that first evening he followed Miss Whitworth with a pertinacity and a devotion which, as George said, entirely put any of our performances in the shade. He would come into our chambers I know not how often in the course of a week, and talk of the beloved one—or rather rave like the most impassioned lover who ever trod the stage.

I think that both of us seniors soon ceased to feel any jealousy because of the marked favour with which young Harold was received. We took to giving him good advice; we urged him to make sure of his ground before he gave his heart away—as though he had not already done that past recalling. George was particularly solemn in his warnings, but I don't think they had the slightest effect.

I remember, indeed, on one occasion, that when Coverley had mentioned the word "flirt" in connection with Miss Whitworth, Harold rose up in arms against him.

"Look here, you miserable old cynic!" he cried, half seriously, half in joke, "I won't listen to a word you've got to say against Blanche. You may call her a flirt if you like, but I know she isn't. She's been kinder to me than any one else in London. Do you think I don't know whether a girl's in earnest or not? And—and she's my friend, and—and I'll thank you not to speak of her again in that way in my presence."

He looked so wounded that George had to make his peace with him by a shambling sort of apology. In point of fact, we could not but admit, looking on as we did now quite as outsiders, that Miss Blanche was exercising a surprising constancy. By the time that she and Harold had known one another three months they were regarded as tacitly engaged, although no open announcement of the fact had been made.

I fear that during this period Cameron made but small progress with his legal studies, and I used gravely to point out to him some of the dangers of his present course; but he would only laugh at me for an old fogey, declare he had plenty of time—as was indeed the case—and begin to talk about much more interesting business.

It was about this time that a garden-party was given by a Mr. Hermann Seyfried, at which the present narrator was privileged to "assist," along with some of the other actors in this little drama. This Mr. Seyfried was a German of great wealth, who lived in a fine mansion and dispensed magnificent hospitality to his friends and acquaintances. The halo of his gold shone round about him, showing him to most people in a very favourable light.

Judged apart from the halo, there was, I fancy, nothing very much to admire; a snuffy, dark-looking little man, with enormous moustaches and a deep, guttural voice—not a "man of parts," judged by English eyes.

Howbeit, most people were very glad to receive his invitations, myself—let me be honest—among the number. He was a bachelor, and had a number of free-and-easy bachelor ways, which "took" with a great number of men; and then, too, it

must be owned that his dinners were remarkably good.

The garden-party in question was, I remember, a most brilliant affair. A great crowd of people was there. I fancy I can see at this moment the squat little figure of the host standing to welcome his guests, and that I hear his "How you do, Meester Vitvorth!—How you do, Meester Camerons?" spoken through the nose with great politeness. Mr. Seyfried was greatly charmed by the fair Blanche, to whom he was paying compliments, most of which were not understood, all day. I confess that, knowing the state of his finances, and knowing also—as I thought—somewhat of the nature of Miss Whitworth, when I saw his evident admiration, I felt a slight uneasiness as regarded Cameron's position.

That gentleman, however, did not betray, and, I believe, did not experience, any such feeling. He was paying his court more assiduously than ever. It did one good to look on his bright, youthful face. Whenever he was not actually by the side of his beloved one, his eyes followed her everywhere. Miss Blanche, I remember, was particularly gracious to some of her old friends—to George and me, and to others of her court—and I have to confess with shame and sorrow that—such is the weakness of man—we were all of us pleased to be so noticed, and showed no resentment whatever. The lady would smile upon and summon you one moment and cut you dead the next; and the victims of this caprice were so sunk in degrading slavery that they cheerfully bore with this treatment, and were always ready to come back to the careless beckoning of the haughty dame.

What amused and a good deal gratified me was to notice the scant consideration shown by Miss Whitworth to Mr. Seyfried. She received his polite speeches with a demure gravity, and made open fun of him behind his back, mimicking his voice and gestures, his compliments, his taking of snuff, and who knows what other peculiarities the foreigner possessed. I believe even Harold was a trifle shocked, and remonstrated with the girl about her behaviour; but he was too ardent a lover to see any faults in her, and had besides his own affairs to discuss. This, I presume, was the subject in hand when I suddenly came upon the two in a peaceful corner in the conservatory, looking particularly confidential.

To show that they were confidential to some purpose, I must refer the indulgent reader back to the letter appearing at the opening of this story, which I received from Mr. Cameron on the day after the garden-party, and which document I consider to be alone responsible for sending me off upon these rambling recollections.

"That looks like a settled thing, at last," said I, as I tossed the paper over to George.

"That, as you say, looks like a settled thing," replied that sardonic individual oracularly, after a perusal; and not another word could I get out of him upon the subject.

We were expecting all that day to have Harold tearing in with his good news. He did not come; and we found that he had that morning been hastily summoned to the other end of England to his father, who lay dangerously ill—at the point of death, it was said. I had to leave town myself on the next day, for a fortnight as I supposed; but it was three or four weeks before I saw my own chambers again, and got a greeting from my dear old George.

After a while it struck me that he was a trifle constrained in manner, and at last I asked him, "Is anything the matter?"

"Ah," he said slowly, "you've not heard the news, then?"

"No," I said impatiently; "news about whom? What news?"

"Only about Blanche Whitworth and old Seyfried," very drily.

"What about them?"

"Engaged to be married; that's all."

"Never!" I cried incredulously.

George nodded.

"It's perfectly true," he said.

"But—Harold!" I exclaimed; "does he know? Good heavens! what will he say?"

"Ah, poor fellow. I don't suppose he does know yet; the news is only just out."

Then suddenly the phlegmatic George burst out in a fury:

"Confound it! It's too bad! What are these women made of? To make a fool of a fine young fellow like that. And he trusted her, poor wretch——"

"Where is he now?" I interrupted.

"I don't know. He's not been home yet—here, I mean—since his father's death. He's alone in the world now, you know. I've heard no word from him since he went away."

"Suppose we walk round to his lodg-

ings," said I, "and see if we can have news of him. If we can get him away with us, before he hears anything, so much the better."

We got up and went out, a vague sense of uneasiness troubling us.

A slight rain was falling as we came into the open air, very cool and pleasant after the hot day. I remember it was about five or six in the evening. Cameron's lodgings were but two or three streets off—only a few minutes' walk.

We could not make any one hear by ringing the bell, and as the front door was unlatched, we walked in.

"Hullo!" said George, as we stood a moment in the passage, "Harold's at home; here are his hat and gloves."

He went to the foot of the stairs, and called:

"Hi! Cameron, where are you, old boy?"

There was no answer.

At this moment the landlady came bustling in. Mr. Cameron had asked her to post a letter, she said. He was upstairs in his room now.

We wondered why he had not answered our call, and said we would go up. To our surprise, his door was locked; nor could we get any reply to our knocking. I think we both became thoroughly frightened now, for the first time.

"Let us get in," said I, "somehow or other."

George made no more ado, but simply put his shoulder against the door and burst it open. We came into the room with a bit of a rush. Then we saw a sight, and stopped dead.

Our friend was stretched upon the floor, his face drawn and ghastly—the face of a corpse. On the table was the wretched phial which told us only too well what had happened. It had held prussic acid; the room was full of the odour. We did what we could, but—poor Harold!—he was quite dead.

Heaven forgive him! We should never hear his friendly voice or cheerful laughter again.

We learned afterwards that, on hearing the news of her engagement, Cameron had written to Miss Whitworth asking if it was true. He received a curt reply—I saw the letter—saying that it was so, and Miss Whitworth must decline any correspondence with Mr. Cameron on the point. Mad with his disappointment, he had hurried to see the girl—had demanded an interview. It was denied him—Miss Blanche spared herself that unpleasantness. He was quite alone, and saw no way out of his trouble, poor fellow, save one.

Even now, knowing how he loved the girl, I wonder whether we, or any one, could have kept him from his dreadful fate, even had we had the chance.

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